REMARKS

Claims 1-13 have been amended to place them in a form more customary for U.S. practice, thereby obviating the rejection over 35 USC 101. Newly added claims 14-23 recite embodiments of the invention and are fully supported by the specification.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony J. Zefano (Reg. No. 27,969)

Attorney for Applicants

Nancy J. Axelrod (Reg. No. 44,014)

Patent Agent

MILLEN, WHITE, ZELANO & BRANIGAN, P. C.

2200 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1400

Arlington, Virginia 22201

(703)812-5311

Internet address: zelano@mwzb.com

Filed: July 19, 2000

AJZ/NJA/lvb

K:\PAT\Sch\1686\PRELIMINARY AMENDMT.wpd